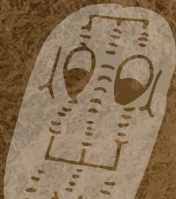


Anthropology is one of the oldest social sciences and yet it is rarely drawn upon in market research. Anthropology describes culture, the abyss of learned behaviours, that we struggle to articulate. Due to its ability to make meaning out of the mundane, anthropology has become one of the foundational social sciences from which the others build ideas.

As a body of knowledge it gives us insight and guidance on how to interpret behaviours within the daily cultural practices of life. It also gives us a narrative for why culture has developed in a particular way. Market research can learn a lot from anthropology, and we hope you can learn a lot from these cards.



Using these principles in research

These cards should give you practical guidance on how to set up good ethnographic research. They demonstrate some of the research tools which are used to interpret culture but which are not immediately obvious. They outline an analytical framework that could emerge from the findings, but they do not tell you what to ask. They act as guiding principles for how to think about your research.

We believe their use as a framework for research projects is two-fold:



To create hypotheses when setting objectives



To help make sense of findings by identifying patterns, contributing towards an analytical framework



Reciprocity

Based on the experience of exchange, reciprocity relates to the practice of giving and receiving, through objects as well as gestures. Reciprocity brings the material and the emotional world into one place, placing importance on the symbolic nature of objects and the emotional expectation of exchange.

Case Study

Living with and managing chronic illness is hard both for the NHS and patients. Whilst so much attention is paid to the type of the service the NHS should run, our research found a real need for people to be able to 'give back' to society and to the NHS. Many people felt overwhelmed with feelings of gratefulness for being looked after by society, despite the fact that they did not belong to the group of those 'most in need'.

New and reformed care plans for this group of people will need to help patients to form networks and groups through which they can help others like themselves and achieve a feeling of reciprocity.





Rite of Passage

A celebration, emotional experience, or transitional moment in life when an individual leaves one social group to enter another. A rite of passage involves a significant change of status in society, where the individual grows and becomes more enlightened.

Case Study

Our client wanted to understand 'motherhood' in Japan and China – the daily life of mums and the cultural and emotional impact women experience, as they become mums.

Our ethnographic research highlighted the experience of mothers in Japan and China as the most dominant rite of passage for women in both places, marking the real separation between being just a young girl and becoming a real woman, respected and honoured in society. The emotional longing for motherhood is strong, as women know they have to become mothers before they can be truly perceived as being real women.

In both modern China and Japan there is a genuine tension between their yearning to do what is perceived as cultural duty, and a desire to follow one's ambitions as young and aspirational women.



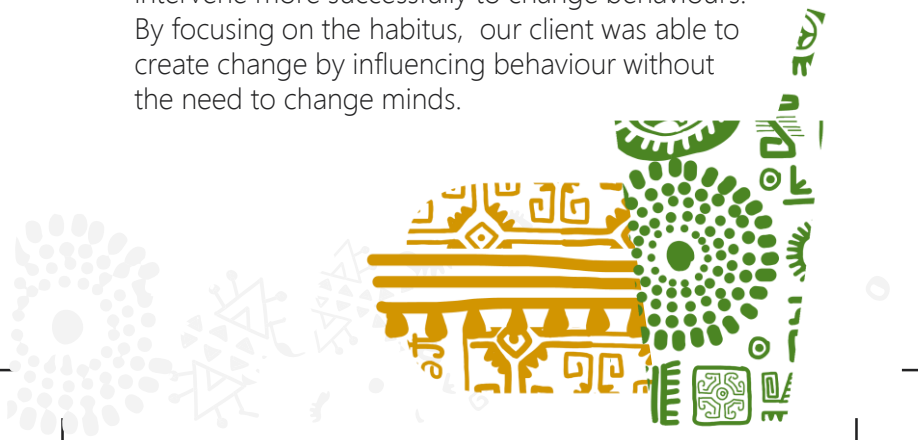
Habitus

Individuals are influenced and organised by the path they tread in life, through a series of engrained habits, routines and socialised norms. Habitus is the way in which individuals come to perceive the social and cultural world around them. Consequently, it guides their everyday behaviour.

Case Study

“Obesity and bad diet is going to be the biggest killer by 2025 in England” (Generic Government Press Release). The ‘facts’ about public health tend to alienate the very people whose behaviour they intend to change.

Our ethnographic study with families across the UK found that public health messages took a pejorative tone, which went in one ear and out of the other. Instead, we looked at ingrained habits and suboptimal, normalised behaviours like ‘Take Away Fridays’ and the habit of over-feeding to demonstrate love. This helped government to intervene more successfully to change behaviours. By focusing on the habitus, our client was able to create change by influencing behaviour without the need to change minds.





Identity

Identity is made up of the qualities, beliefs, personality traits, looks and expressions that define a person or a group. Identity is created through emotional perceptions of the self and of the other, and naturally creates feelings of inclusion and exclusion. It is always in the meeting with the other that the identity of the self is formed.

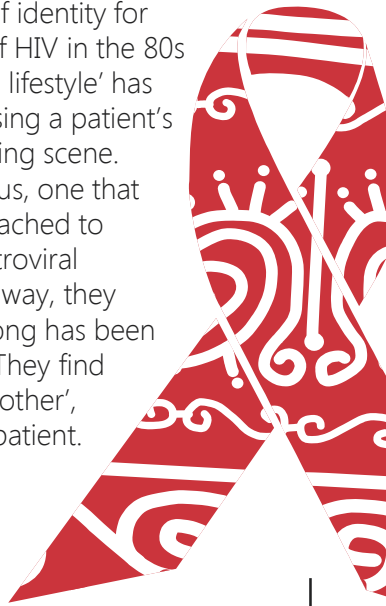


Reference: Michael Taussig

Case Study

The rapid spread of HIV amongst at risk communities quickly led to its associations with homosexuality, sex work and drug use. Labels such as the 'Gay Plague' or 'Gay Cancer' vilified communities.

Through our ethnographic research we found that the social nature of HIV, its links to lifestyle and 'risky behaviour', and the consequent stigma means that HIV is often the defining marker of identity for patients. The plague-like nature of HIV in the 80s and the associations with 'reckless lifestyle' has created a need for actively endorsing a patient's own HIV status within the gay dating scene. It becomes a marker of social status, one that reads responsible and mature, attached to being HIV positive and on anti-retroviral treatment (non-infectious). In this way, they transform an identity that for so long has been associated with 'risky behaviour'. They find identity through definition of 'the other', the 'dirty' and 'irresponsible' HIV patient.





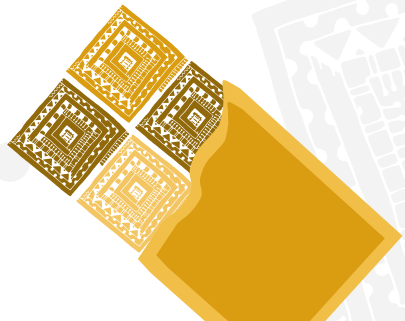
Exoticism

Exoticism is sometimes seen as the charm of the unfamiliar or the creation of an exciting, inaccessible “other”. It is often used to sensationalise cultural difference, presenting these desirable “others” – be they people, places or products - as a unified entity with attributes and ways completely different to one’s own.

Case Study

Chocolate is part and parcel of daily life. It's such an integral part of Western food culture, that it is rarely even thought of as being different or special. Yet through our ethnographic research in rural India and Brazil, we found that for people living in rural villages, chocolate is synonymous with Western brands and represents an affiliation with globalisation and a desirable culture. In these villages, chocolate is a premium, luxury product and consequently an exotic object of desire, a way in which to show off to friends, a special gift for special occasions.

Through recognising the exotic nature of chocolate in these rural villages, our client was able to design their communications by emphasising the symbols of exoticism in the brand.





Myth

Myths are stories created to give meaning to social order or values. They reflect the underlying human need to find patterns of order in the social world and to combat chaos and disorder. These stories as myths come to express the fears, dreams, goals, anxieties, and ambitions of societies and individuals, as well as the central ideas of the time.

Case Study

Most people can't smell their own homes, yet many people use candles, sprays and other products to make their home smell in a particular way. Our ethnographic research for a global fragrance house showed the manner in which consumers attempt to project new ideas about themselves through the use of fragrance in their homes, helping them to escape the disorder (and the mess!) that surrounds them.

These ideas and smells become myths – myths which are used to establish a sense of order amidst the chaos. These myths created through subtle olfactory cues, allow consumers to believe they are looking after their family by having a strong 'clean' smell in the bathroom, creating a solution for airborne allergies, or curating a warm and cosy environment for guests.





Glocal

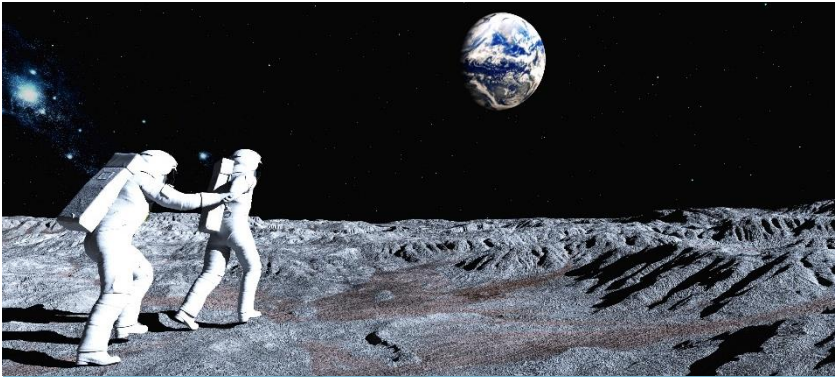
The point at which local culture is influenced and reformed by external global trends. Glocal culture celebrates the external influences of globalisation through a cultural norming worldwide. The concept of glocal plays a role in the way we interpret human and social truths.

Case Study

The global recession hit many retailers hard, particularly amongst their core customer group – low budget customers. Value propositions, once a marker of low-cost products for the masses, had fast turned into a symbol of everything that was wrong with the food industry.

Our global ethnographic research into the life of a low budget customer showed that being poor did not equate to an acceptance of bad food. In fact, when looking at low budget customers across the world, their one unifying factor was that they were the most discerning customers over quality, because they cooked everything from scratch. So why would they buy a 'Value' product? The result was a global rebrand that turned Value ranges into local Farm Ranges, where meat, vegetables and fish all came from specific, named farms, recognising the point at which local culture and global trends meet.





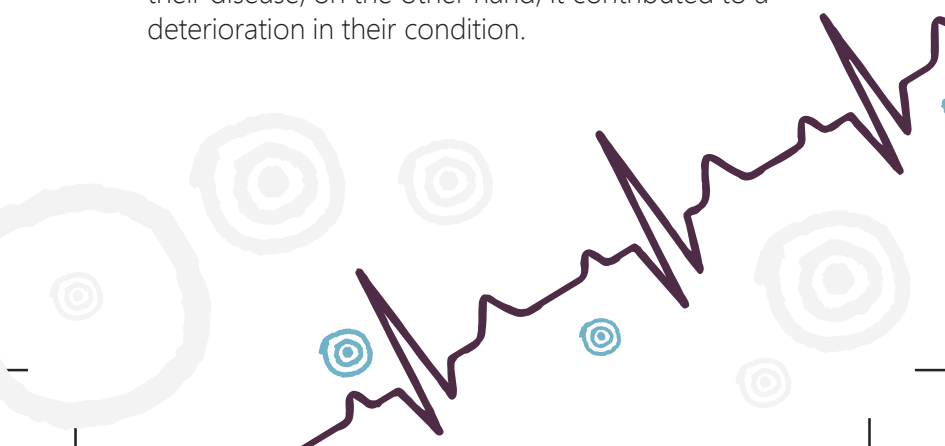
Mastery

The acquisition of knowledge or the perfection of a skill creates a sense of mastery in a person (or group of people). At its core, it embodies a desire for self-improvement, which itself can become addictive, as people strive towards an end goal that they may never be able to reach. Mastery is a double-edged sword, as it can create a sense of pride (sometimes falsely), confidence (sometimes unfounded), and power (sometimes corruptive) within individuals.

Case Study

Andrew and Fiona had been measuring their blood pressure for years. They would often do it together, with perfect regularity, and were proud to tell us that they adapted their lifestyle when the readings were getting worse.

Our ethnographic research for a large pharmaceutical company showed us that their repetitive behaviour was actually inaccurate, as they were using the machine incorrectly, which in turn gave them varied readings. On the one hand, their mistaken sense of their mastery of their blood pressure measurement made them feel in control of their disease; on the other hand, it contributed to a deterioration in their condition.





Materiality

Our abilities to express ourselves are intrinsically linked to our relationship with objects and things, which become symbolic of our relationships with other people and our place in society. Objects make up our living environment which in turn guides and shapes our behaviour. Materiality is a recognition of the value inherent in an object or brand; ownership infers symbolic value upon the person.

Case Study

Families having to make a living on \$2 a day are in a precarious situation at the “Base of the Pyramid”. Our client wanted to understand their daily life in Ethiopia, India and Nigeria, and to understand their attitudes and behaviours around spending and nutrition.

Our ethnographic research revealed many of the tensions that people experience on a daily basis, as they make trade-offs about food, medication, education and work. People’s ability to express themselves through products and objects is an important part of their identity and their social status. Materiality and access to objects therefore come to be defining in a person’s ability to move up the social ladder – whether real or perceived – simply through the symbolic status inherent in material objects.





Social Capital

Social capital is made up of a web of social relations that allow us to thrive – or cause us to struggle when absent. Social capital is what generates social cohesion and connectedness, and it is created through reciprocity, trust, and cooperation between and amongst individuals who make up a social unit. Access to social capital is a determinant of well-being in society.

Case Study

Look around your neighbourhood – which car brands and models do you see? You may notice that people tend to buy the same vehicle that they see in their street and in their neighbourhood. Through our ethnographic research for an automotive manufacturer we found that cars represent social capital – it can help an individual gain status in the community, and owning a similar car can also be a gesture that says ‘I’m one of you’.

We discovered that SUV owners in the UK are acutely aware of the social capital that their car gives them (though they don’t use those words!). Many had bought a 7-seater vehicle, not because they had a large family (indeed, many did not), but rather to be able to offer lifts and reciprocate kindness to other families in the neighbourhood.





Imagined Communities

A socially constructed community based on a strong sense of group identity and group acceptance, created and imagined by people who perceive themselves to be part of that group. By processes of inclusion and exclusion, the group consciousness is formed through a separation of 'us' and 'them'.

Case Study

Responsible banks want to understand vulnerable customers. This can be hard when vulnerable customers are merely an imagined community, distant from those working in the bank creating services.

Research commissioned by a large UK bank into vulnerability expected to find a bounded group of people with definable attributes. Instead, what our ethnographic research uncovered is that while there are indeed people who are vulnerable (through poverty or illness), vulnerable customers are not an easily defined group of customers that are different. Rather, vulnerability can be a fluid state of which people move in and out according to circumstance, for example, life crises, such as bereavement, divorce or illness.



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